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(54) **Novel use of peptide compounds for treating central neuropathic pain**

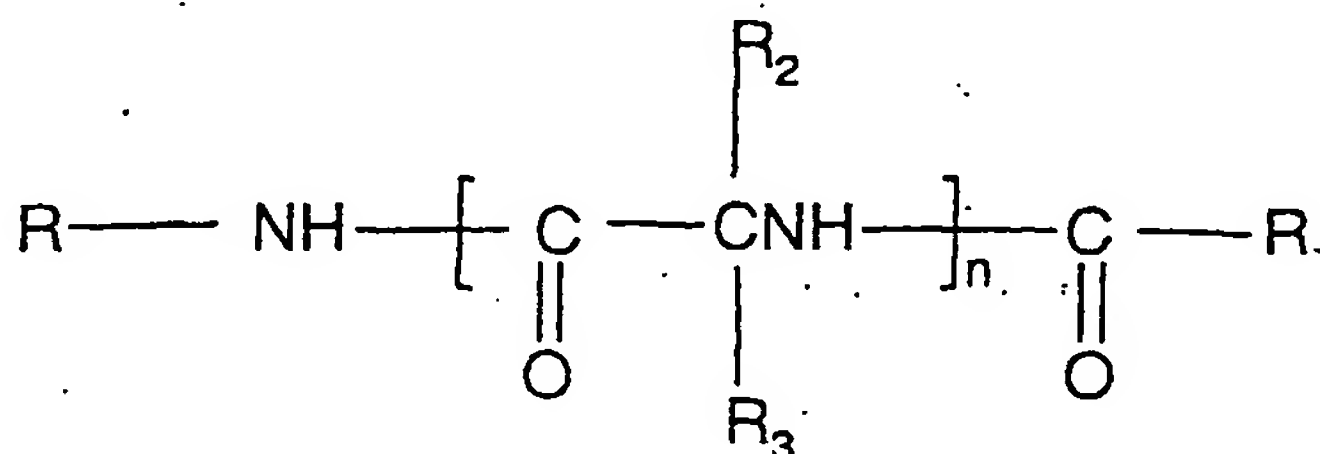
(57) The present invention concerns the use of peptide compounds for treating central neuropathic pain.

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Description

[0001] The present invention is directed to the novel use of a class of peptide compounds for treating central neuropathic pain.

[0002] Certain peptides are known to exhibit central nervous system (CNS) activity and are useful in the treatment of epilepsy and other CNS disorders. These peptides which are described in the U.S. Patent No. 5,378,729 have the Formula (Ia):.



Formula (Ia)

wherein

R is hydrogen, lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, aryl, aryl lower alkyl, heterocyclic, heterocyclic lower alkyl, lower alkyl heterocyclic, lower cycloalkyl, lower cycloalkyl lower alkyl, and R is unsubstituted or is substituted with at least one electron withdrawing group or electron donating group;

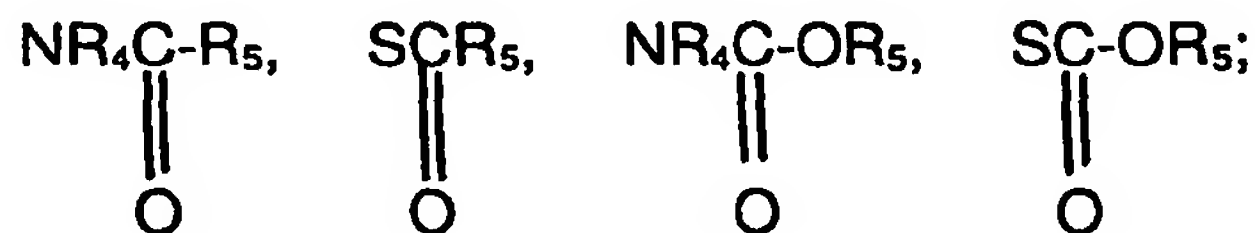
R<sub>1</sub> is hydrogen or lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, aryl lower alkyl, aryl, heterocyclic lower alkyl, heterocyclic, lower cycloalkyl, lower cycloalkyl lower alkyl, each unsubstituted or substituted with an electron donating group or an electron withdrawing group; and

R<sub>2</sub> and R<sub>3</sub> are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, aryl lower alkyl, aryl, heterocyclic, heterocyclic lower alkyl, lower alkyl heterocyclic, lower cycloalkyl, lower cycloalkyl lower alkyl, or Z-Y wherein R<sub>2</sub> and R<sub>3</sub> may be unsubstituted or substituted with at least one electron withdrawing group or electron donating group;

Z is O, S, S(O)<sub>a</sub>, NR<sub>4</sub>, PR<sub>4</sub> or a chemical bond;

Y is hydrogen, lower alkyl, aryl, aryl lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, halo, heterocyclic, heterocyclic lower alkyl, and Y may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron donating group or an electron withdrawing group, provided that when Y is halo, Z is a chemical bond, or

ZY taken together is NR<sub>4</sub>NR<sub>5</sub>R<sub>7</sub>, NR<sub>4</sub>OR<sub>5</sub>, ONR<sub>4</sub>R<sub>7</sub>, OPR<sub>4</sub>R<sub>5</sub>, PR<sub>4</sub>OR<sub>5</sub>, SNR<sub>4</sub>R<sub>7</sub>, NR<sub>4</sub>SR<sub>7</sub>, SPR<sub>4</sub>R<sub>5</sub> or PR<sub>4</sub>SR<sub>7</sub>, NR<sub>4</sub>PR<sub>5</sub>R<sub>6</sub> or PR<sub>4</sub>NR<sub>5</sub>R<sub>7</sub>.



R<sub>4</sub>, R<sub>5</sub> and R<sub>6</sub> are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl, aryl, aryl lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, or lower alkynyl, wherein R<sub>4</sub>, R<sub>5</sub> and R<sub>6</sub> may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group or an electron donating group; and

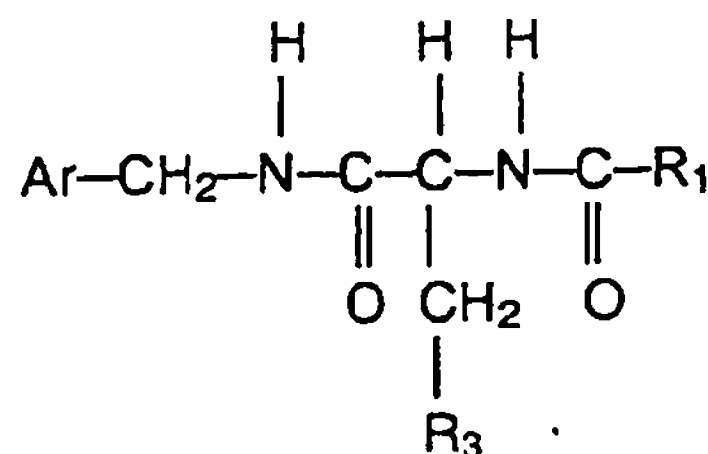
R<sub>7</sub> is R<sub>6</sub> or COOR<sub>8</sub> or COR<sub>8</sub>;

$R_8$  is hydrogen or lower alkyl, or aryl lower alkyl, and the aryl or alkyl group may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group or an electron donating group; and

n is 1-4; and

a is 1-3.

[0003] U.S. Patent No. 5,773,475 also discloses additional compounds useful for treating CNS disorders. These compounds are N-benzyl-2-amino-3-methoxy-propionamide having the Formula (IIa):



**Formula (IIa)**

wherein

Ar is aryl which is unsubstituted or substituted with halo;  $R_3$  is lower alkoxy; and  $R_1$  is methyl.

[0004] The patents US 5.378.729 and US 5.773.475 are hereby incorporated by reference. However, neither of these patents describes the use of these compounds as specific analgesics for the treatment of central neuropathic pain, especially spinal cord injury pain.

[0005] WO 02/074297 relates to the use of a compound according to Formula (IIa) wherein Ar is phenyl which may be substituted by at least one halo,  $R_3$  is lower alkoxy containing 1-3 carbon atoms and  $R_1$  is methyl for the preparation of pharmaceutical compositions useful for the treatment of allodynia related to peripheral neuropathic pain.

[0006] WO 02/074784 relates to the use of a compound having Formula (Ia) and/or Formula (IIa) showing antinociceptive properties for treating different types and symptoms of acute and chronic pain, especially non neuropathic inflammatory pain, e.g. rheumatoid arthritic pain and/or secondary inflammatory osteo-arthritic pain.

[0007] Pain is a subjective experience and the perception of pain is performed in particular parts of the Central Nervous System (CNS). Usually noxious (peripheral) stimuli are transmitted to the Central Nervous System (CNS) beforehand, but pain is not always associated with nociception. A broad variety of different types of clinical pain exists, that are derived from different underlying pathophysiological mechanisms and that will need different treatment approaches.

[0008] The perception of pain may be characterized by three major types of clinical pain:

- acute pain
- chronic pain
- neuropathic pain

[0009] Acute clinical pain typically results from inflammation or soft tissue injury. This type of pain is adaptive and has the biologically relevant function of warning and enabling healing and repair of an already damaged body part to occur undisturbed. A protective function is achieved by making the injured/inflamed area and surrounding tissue hypersensitive to all stimuli so that contact with any external stimulus is avoided. The neuronal mechanisms underlying this type of clinical pain are fairly well understood and pharmacological control of acute clinical pain is available and effective by means of e.g. Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) up to opioids depending on type and extension of the sensation.

[0010] Chronic clinical pain appears as sustained sensory abnormalities resulting from an ongoing peripheral pa-

thology such as cancer or chronic inflammation (e.g. arthritis) or it can be independent of the initiating triggers. The latter being maladaptive, offering no survival advantage and very often no effective treatment is available.

**[0011]** There are several causes of human neuropathy with considerable variability in symptoms and neurological deficits. Painful neuropathies are defined as neurological disorders characterised by persistence of pain and hypersensitivity in a body region, of which the sensory innervation has been damaged, but damage to sensory nerves does not always produce neuropathic pain, usually loss of sensation rather than hypersensitivity or pain are observed.

**[0012]** Specific somatosensory disorders are referred to as allodynia (innocuous somatosensory stimulation evokes abnormal intense pain sensation with an explosive, radiating character often outlasting stimulus duration like a trigger), hyperalgesia (noxious stimulation evokes more intense and prolonged pain sensations), paresthesia (spontaneous aversive but nonpainful sensations, described as tingling or "pins and needles"), dysesthesia (evoked as well as spontaneous abnormal sensations).

**[0013]** Neuropathic pain can be classified as peripheral and central neuropathic pain. Peripheral neuropathic pain is caused by injury or infection of peripheral sensory nerves, whereas central neuropathic pain is caused by damage to the CNS and/or the spinal cord.

**[0014]** Common analgesics like opioids and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) improve only insufficiently chronic abnormal pain syndromes as peripheral and central neuropathic pain due to insufficient efficacy or limiting side effects. In the search for alternative treatment regimes to produce satisfactory and sustained pain relief, corticosteroids, conduction blockade, glycerol, antidepressants, local anesthetics, gangliosides and electrostimulation have been tried, but mainly anti-convulsants have been found useful against various types of peripheral neuropathic pain conditions, but appear to be most effective in cases of paroxysmal, lancinating events, e.g. trigeminal neuralgia.

**[0015]** Central neuropathic pain is a particular form of neuropathic pain which is a particularly difficult form to be treated (Yeziarski and Burchiel, 2002). Due to lesions in the spinothalamocortical pathways, ectopic neuronal discharges can occur in different neurons of the spinal cord and brain. Hyperexcitability in damaged areas of the central nervous system plays a major role in the development of central neuropathic pain. Patients with central pain almost always have stimulus-independent pain. Stimulus-dependent pain may also be present, usually because skin areas or viscera below the lesions are allodynic. Thus, partial spinal lesions may tend to produce pain to a greater extent than do complete lesions.

**[0016]** The mechanisms of central neuropathic pain are poorly understood. Current treatments use a variety of pharmacological, surgical, physical and psychological approaches. However, the evidence for many of the treatments is still limited.

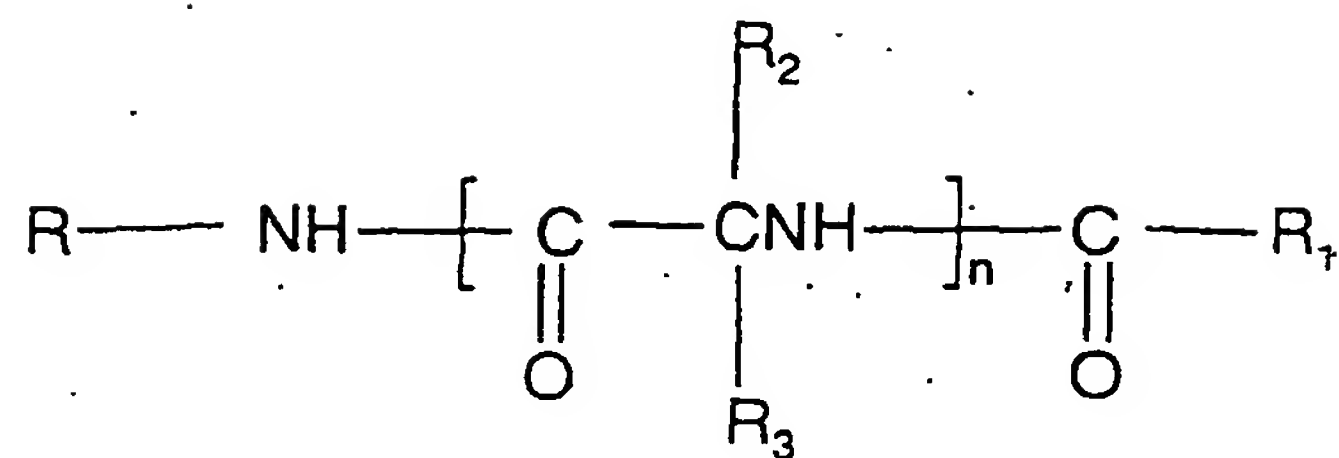
**[0017]** If general overactivity and unlearned low threshold activation of sensory neurons is considered as one of the main syndromes of neuropathy and neuropathic pain sensation with a marked mechanoallodynia as the most disabling clinical symptom, selective inhibition of this pathophysiological event instead of general inhibition of high threshold noxious stimuli (by e.g. local anesthetics) of the normal sensory nociception provides clear advantages.

**[0018]** The use of compounds of Formula (Ib) or/and Formula (IIb) for treatment of central neuropathic pain has not been reported. Thus, the present invention concerns the use of said compounds of Formulae (Ib) or/and (IIb) for the preparation of a pharmaceutical composition for the treatment of central neuropathic pain, especially for the treatment of spinal cord injury pain.

**[0019]** Surprisingly, application of compounds (Ib) or/and (IIb), particularly (R)-2-acetamide-N-benzyl-3-methoxypropionamide (SPM 927) may produce a dose-dependent anti-allodynic effect in spinally injured rats, the well accepted animal model for central neuropathic pain, following single dose administration. Even more surprisingly, chronic allodynia was alleviated after long-term administration (e.g. for at least one week) without signs of tolerance. The abolishment of allodynia following cessation of drug administration during chronic SPM 927 administration is particularly interesting since this has not been observed with other analgesics that have been tested in this model, including morphine (Yu et al. 1997a, b), gabapentin (Hao et al. 2000) and the adenosine analogue r-phenylisopropyladenosine (von Heijne et al. 1998). This is likely to be due to a cumulative effect from the repeated administration, resulting in normalization of basal sensitivity without signs of tolerance. Thus the compounds of the present invention, especially SPM 927, are suitable for the treatment for spinal cord injury pain in particular and centrally mediated neuropathic pain in general. Further, the compounds are suitable for reducing the susceptibility of patients to spinal cord injury pain in particular and centrally mediated neuropathic pain in general. The invention is applicable for human or veterinary medicine.

**[0020]** Thus, a compound according to the invention useful for the treatment of central neuropathic pain, preferably for treatment of spinal cord injury pain, has the general Formula (Ib)

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**Formula (Ib)**

wherein

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R is hydrogen, lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, aryl, aryl lower alkyl, heterocyclic, heterocyclic lower alkyl, lower alkyl heterocyclic, lower cycloalkyl or lower cycloalkyl lower alkyl, and R is unsubstituted or is substituted with at least one electron withdrawing group, or electron donating group;

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R<sub>1</sub> is hydrogen or lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, aryl lower alkyl, aryl, heterocyclic lower alkyl, lower alkyl heterocyclic, heterocyclic, lower cycloalkyl, lower cycloalkyl lower alkyl, each unsubstituted or substituted with an electron donating group or an electron withdrawing group;

and

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R<sub>2</sub> and R<sub>3</sub> are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, aryl lower alkyl, aryl, halo, heterocyclic, heterocyclic lower alkyl, lower alkyl heterocyclic, lower cycloalkyl, lower cycloalkyl lower alkyl, or Z-Y wherein R<sub>2</sub> and R<sub>3</sub> may be unsubstituted or substituted with at least one electron withdrawing group or electron donating group;

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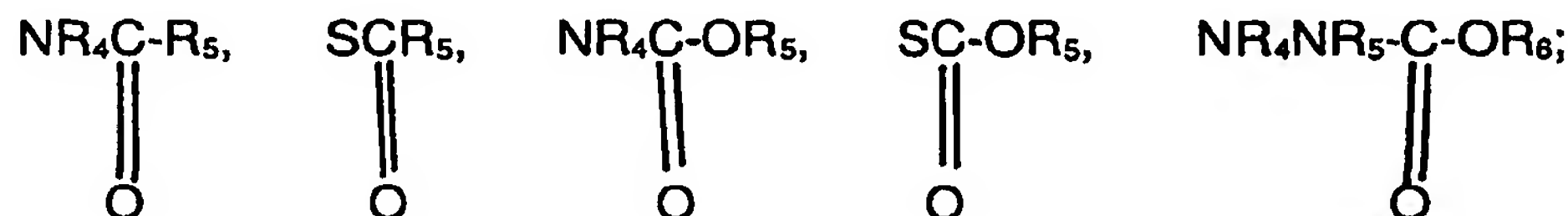
Z is O, S, S(O)<sub>a</sub>, NR<sub>4</sub>, NR'<sub>6</sub>, PR<sub>4</sub> or a chemical bond;

Y is hydrogen, lower alkyl, aryl, aryl lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, halo, heterocyclic, heterocyclic lower alkyl, lower alkyl heterocyclic and Y may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron donating group or an electron withdrawing group, provided that when Y is halo, Z is a chemical bond, or

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ZY taken together is NR<sub>4</sub>NR<sub>5</sub>R<sub>7</sub>, NR<sub>4</sub>OR<sub>5</sub>, ONR<sub>4</sub>R<sub>7</sub>, OPR<sub>4</sub>R<sub>5</sub>, PR<sub>4</sub>OR<sub>5</sub>, SNR<sub>4</sub>R<sub>7</sub>, NR<sub>4</sub>SR<sub>7</sub>, SPR<sub>4</sub>R<sub>5</sub>, PR<sub>4</sub>SR<sub>7</sub>, NR<sub>4</sub>PR<sub>5</sub>R<sub>6</sub>, PR<sub>4</sub>NR<sub>5</sub>R<sub>7</sub> or N<sup>+</sup>R<sub>5</sub>R<sub>6</sub>R<sub>7</sub>,

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R'<sub>6</sub> is hydrogen, lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, or lower alkenyl which may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group or electron donating group;

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R<sub>4</sub>, R<sub>5</sub> and R<sub>6</sub> are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl, aryl, aryl lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, or lower alkynyl, wherein R<sub>4</sub>, R<sub>5</sub> and R<sub>6</sub> may independently be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group or an electron donating group;

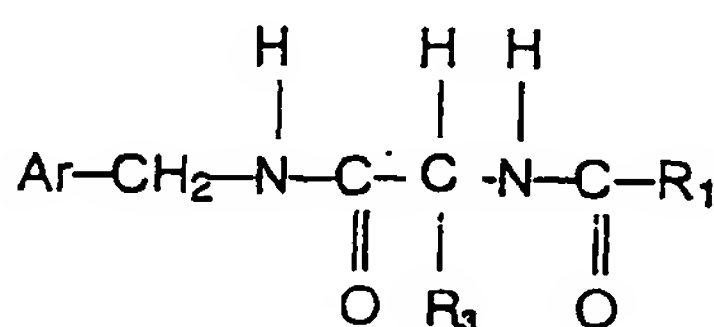
R<sub>7</sub> is R<sub>6</sub> or COOR<sub>8</sub> or COR<sub>8</sub>, which R<sub>7</sub> may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group or an electron donating group;

R<sub>8</sub> is hydrogen or lower alkyl, or aryl lower alkyl, and the aryl or alkyl group may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group or an electron donating group; and

n is 1-4; and

a is 1-3.

**[0021]** Furthermore a compound according to the invention has the general Formula (IIb)



**Formula (IIb)**

wherein

Ar is aryl, especially phenyl, which is unsubstituted or substituted with at least one halo; R<sub>3</sub> is -CH<sub>2</sub>-Q, wherein Q is lower alkoxy; and R<sub>1</sub> is lower alkyl, especially methyl.

**[0022]** The present invention is also directed to the preparation of pharmaceutical compositions comprising a compound according to Formula (Ib) and/or Formula (IIb) useful for the treatment of central neuropathic pain, preferably spinal cord injury pain.

**[0023]** The compounds of Formula (Ia) are described in U.S. Patent No. 5,378,729, the contents of which are incorporated by reference.

**[0024]** The "lower alkyl" groups when used alone or in combination with other groups, are lower alkyl containing from 1 to 6 carbon atoms, especially 1 to 3 carbon atoms, and may be straight chain or branched. These groups include methyl, ethyl, propyl, isopropyl, butyl, isobutyl, tertiary butyl, amyl, hexyl, and the like.

**[0025]** The "lower alkoxy" groups are lower alkoxy containing from 1 to 6 carbon atoms, especially 1 to 3 carbon atoms, and may be straight chain or branched. These groups include methoxy, ethoxy, propoxy, butoxy, isobutoxy, tert-butoxy, pentoxy, hexoxy and the like.

**[0026]** The "aryl lower alkyl" groups include, for example, benzyl, phenethyl, phenpropyl, phenisopropyl, phenbutyl, diphenylmethyl, 1,1-diphenylethyl, 1,2-diphenylethyl, and the like.

**[0027]** The term "aryl", when used alone or in combination, refers to an aromatic group which contains from 6 up to 18 ring carbon atoms and up to a total of 25 carbon atoms and includes the polynuclear aromatics. These aryl groups may be monocyclic, bicyclic, tricyclic or polycyclic and are fused rings. A polynuclear aromatic compound as used herein, is meant to encompass bicyclic and tricyclic fused aromatic ring systems containing from 10-18 ring carbon atoms and up to a total of 25 carbon atoms. The aryl group includes phenyl, and the polynuclear aromatics e.g., naphthyl, anthracenyl, phenanthrenyl, azulenyl and the like. The aryl group also includes groups like ferrocenyl.

**[0028]** "Lower alkenyl" is an alkenyl group containing from 2 to 6 carbon atoms and at least one double bond. These groups may be straight chained or branched and may be in the Z or E form. Such groups include vinyl, propenyl, 1-butenyl, isobutenyl, 2-butenyl, 1-pentenyl, (Z)-2-pentenyl, (E)-2-pentenyl, (Z)-4-methyl-2-pentenyl, (E)-4-methyl-2-pentenyl, pentadienyl, e.g., 1, 3 or 2,4-pentadienyl, and the like.

**[0029]** The term "lower alkynyl" is an alkynyl group containing 2 to 6 carbon atoms and may be straight chained as well as branched. It includes such groups as ethynyl, propynyl, 1-butyne, 2-butyne, 1-pentyne, 2-pentyne, 3-methyl-1-pentyne, 3-pentyne, 1-hexyne, 2-hexyne, 3-hexyne and the like.

**[0030]** The term "lower cycloalkyl" when used alone or in combination is a cycloalkyl group containing from 3 to 18 ring carbon atoms and up to a total of 25 carbon atoms. The cycloalkyl groups may be monocyclic, bicyclic, tricyclic, or polycyclic and the rings are fused. The cycloalkyl may be completely saturated or partially saturated. Examples include cyclopropyl, cyclobutyl, cyclopentyl, cyclohexyl, cycloheptyl, cyclooctyl, cyclodecyl, cyclohexenyl, cyclopentenyl, cyclooctenyl, cycloheptenyl, decalinyl, hydroindanyl, indanyl, fenchyl, pinenyl, adamantyl, and the like. Cycloalkyl

includes the cis or trans forms. Furthermore, the substituents may either be in endo or exo positions in the bridged bicyclic systems.

**[0031]** The term "electron-withdrawing and electron donating" refer to the ability of a substituent to withdraw or donate electrons, respectively, relative to that of hydrogen if the hydrogen atom occupied the same position in the molecule.

These terms are well understood by one skilled in the art and are discussed in Advanced Organic Chemistry, by J. March, John Wiley and Sons, New York, NY, pp.16-18 (1985) and the discussion therein is incorporated herein by reference. Electron withdrawing groups include halo, including bromo, fluoro, chloro, iodo and the like; nitro, carboxy, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, formyl, carboxyamido, aryl, quaternary ammonium, trifluoromethyl, aryl lower alkanoyl, carbalkoxy and the like. Electron donating groups include such groups as hydroxy, lower alkoxy, including methoxy, ethoxy and the like; lower alkyl, such as methyl, ethyl, and the like; amino, lower alkylamino, di (loweralkyl) amino, aryloxy such as phenoxy, mercapto, lower alkylthio, lower alkylmercapto, disulfide (lower alkylthio) and the like. One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that some of the aforesaid substituents may be considered to be electron donating or electron withdrawing under different chemical conditions. Moreover, the present invention contemplates any combination of substituents selected from the above-identified groups.

**[0032]** The term "halo" includes fluoro, chloro, bromo, iodo and the like.

**[0033]** The term "acyl" includes lower alkanoyl containing from 1 to 6 carbon atoms and may be straight chains or branched. These groups include, for example, formyl, acetyl, propionyl, butyryl, isobutyryl, tertiary butyryl, pentanoyl and hexanoyl.

**[0034]** As employed herein, the heterocyclic substituent contains at least one sulfur, nitrogen or oxygen ring atom, but also may include one or several of said atoms in the ring. The heterocyclic substituents contemplated by the present invention include heteroaromatics and saturated and partially saturated heterocyclic compounds. These heterocyclics may be monocyclic, bicyclic, tricyclic or polycyclic and are fused rings. They may contain up to 18 ring atoms and up to a total of 17 ring carbon atoms and a total of up to 25 carbon atoms. The heterocyclics are also intended to include the so-called benzoheterocyclics. Representative heterocyclics include furyl, thienyl, pyrazolyl, pyrrolyl, methylpyrrolyl, imidazolyl, indolyl, thiazolyl, oxazolyl, isothiazolyl, isoxazolyl, piperidyl, pyrrolinyl, piperazinyl, quinolyl, triazolyl, tetrazolyl, isoquinolyl, benzofuryl, benzothienyl, morpholinyl, benzoxazolyl, tetrahydrofuryl, pyranal, indazolyl, purinyl, indolyl, pyrazolindinyl, imidazolindinyl, imadazolindinyl, pyrrolidinyl, furazanyl, N-methylindolyl, methylfuryl, pyridazinyl, pyrimidinyl, pyrazinyl, pyridyl, epoxy, aziridino, oxetanyl, azetidyl, the N-oxides of the nitrogen containing heterocycles, such as the N-oxides of pyridyl, pyrazinyl, and pyrimidinyl and the like.

**[0035]** The preferred heterocyclics are thienyl, furyl, pyrrolyl, benzofuryl, benzothienyl, indolyl, methylpyrrolyl, morpholinyl, pyridyl, pyrazinyl, imidazolyl, pyrimidinyl, or pyridazinyl. The preferred heterocyclic is a 5 or 6-membered heterocyclic compound. The especially preferred heterocyclic is furyl, pyridyl, pyrazinyl, imidazolyl, pyrimidinyl, or pyridazinyl. The most preferred heterocyclics are furyl and pyridyl.

**[0036]** The preferred compounds are those wherein n is 1, but di (n=2), tri (n=3) and tetrapeptides (n=4) are also contemplated to be within the scope of the invention.

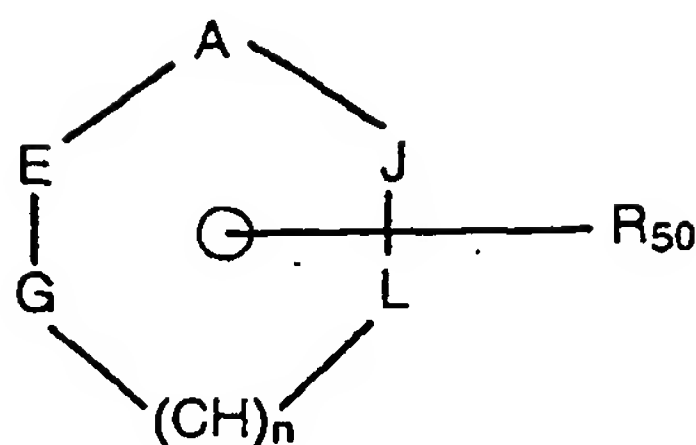
**[0037]** The preferred values of R is aryl lower alkyl, especially benzyl especially those wherein the phenyl ring thereof is unsubstituted or substituted with electron donating groups or electron withdrawing groups, such as halo (e.g., F).

**[0038]** The preferred R<sub>1</sub> is H or lower alkyl. The most preferred R<sub>1</sub> group is methyl.

**[0039]** The preferred electron donating substituents or/and electron withdrawing substituents are halo, nitro, alkanoyl, formyl, arylalkanoyl, aryloyl, carboxyl, carbalkoxy, carboxamido, cyano, sulfonyl, sulfoxide, heterocyclic, guanidine, quaternary ammonium, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, sulfonium salts, hydroxy, lower alkoxy, lower alkyl, amino, lower alkylamino, di(loweralkyl)amino, amino lower alkyl, mercapto, mercaptoalkyl, alkylthio, and alkylthio. The term "sulfide" encompasses mercapto, mercapto alkyl and alkylthio, while the term disulfide encompasses alkylthio. Especially preferred electron donating or/and electron withdrawing groups are halo or lower alkoxy, most preferred are fluoro or methoxy. These preferred substituents may be substituted on any one of R, R<sub>1</sub>, R<sub>2</sub>, R<sub>3</sub>, R<sub>4</sub>, R<sub>5</sub>, R<sub>6</sub>, R<sub>7</sub>, R<sub>8</sub> or R<sub>50</sub> as defined herein.

**[0040]** The ZY groups representative of R<sub>2</sub> and R<sub>3</sub> include hydroxy, alkoxy, such as methoxy, ethoxy, aryloxy, such as phenoxy; thioalkoxy, such as thiomethoxy, thioethoxy; thioaryloxy such as thiophenoxy; amino; alkylamino, such as methylamino, ethylamino; arylamino, such as anilino; lower dialkylamino, such as, dimethylamino; trialkyl ammonium salt, hydrazino; alkylhydrazino and arylhydrazino, such as N-methylhydrazino, N-phenylhydrazino, carbalkoxy hydrazino, aralkoxycarbonyl hydrazino, aryloxycarbonyl hydrazino, hydroxyl amino, such as N-hydroxylamino (-NH-OH), lower alkoxy amino [(NHOR<sub>18</sub>) wherein R<sub>18</sub> is lower alkyl], N-lower alkylhydroxyl amino [(NR<sub>18</sub>)OH wherein R<sub>18</sub> is lower alkyl], N-lower alkyl-O-lower alkylhydroxyamino, i.e., [N(R<sub>18</sub>)OR<sub>19</sub> wherein R<sub>18</sub> and R<sub>19</sub> are independently lower alkyl], and o-hydroxylamino (-O-NH<sub>2</sub>); alkylamido such as acetamido; trifluoroacetamido; lower alkoxyamino, (e.g., NH (OCH<sub>3</sub>)); and heterocyclicamino, such as pyrazoylamino.

**[0041]** The preferred heterocyclic groups representative of R<sub>2</sub> and R<sub>3</sub> are monocyclic 5- or 6-membered heterocyclic moieties of the formula:



or those corresponding partially or fully saturated form thereof wherein n is 0 or 1; and

$R_{50}$  is H or an electron withdrawing group or electron donating group;

A, E, L, J and G are independently CH, or a heteroatom selected from the group consisting of N, O, S;

but when n is 0, G is CH, or a heteroatom selected from the group consisting of NH, O and S with the proviso that at most two of A, E, L, J and G are heteroatoms.

**[0042]** When n is 0, the above heteroaromatic moiety is a five membered ring, while if n is 1, the heterocyclic moiety is a six membered monocyclic heterocyclic moiety. The preferred heterocyclic moieties are those aforementioned heterocyclics which are monocyclic.

**[0043]** If the ring depicted hereinabove contains a nitrogen ring atom, then the N-oxide forms are also contemplated to be within the scope of the invention.

**[0044]** When  $R_2$  or  $R_3$  is a heterocyclic of the above formula, it may be bonded to the main chain by a ring carbon atom. When n is 0,  $R_2$  or  $R_3$  may additionally be bonded to the main chain by a nitrogen ring atom.

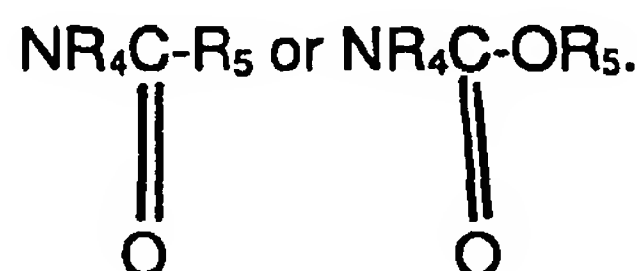
**[0045]** Other preferred moieties of  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are hydrogen, aryl, e.g., phenyl, aryl alkyl, e.g., benzyl and alkyl.

**[0046]** It is to be understood that the preferred groups of  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  may be unsubstituted or substituted with electron donating or electron withdrawing groups. It is preferred that  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl, which is either unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group or an electron donating group, such as lower alkoxy (e.g., methoxy, ethoxy, and the like), N-hydroxylamino, N-lower alkylhydroxyamino, N-loweralkyl-O-loweralkyl and alkylhydroxyamino.

**[0047]** It is preferred that one of  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  is hydrogen.

**[0048]** It is preferred that n is one.

**[0049]** It is more preferred that n=1 and one of  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  is hydrogen. It is especially preferred that in this embodiment,  $R_2$  is hydrogen and  $R_3$  is lower alkyl or ZY; Z is O,  $NR_4$  or  $PR_4$ ; Y is hydrogen or lower alkyl; ZY is  $NR_4NR_5R_7$ ,  $NR_4OR_5$ ,  $ONR_4R_7$ ,



**[0050]** In another especially preferred embodiment, n=1,  $R_2$  is hydrogen and  $R_3$  is lower alkyl which may be substituted or unsubstituted with an electron donating or electron withdrawing group,  $NR_4OR_5$ , or  $ONR_4R_7$ .

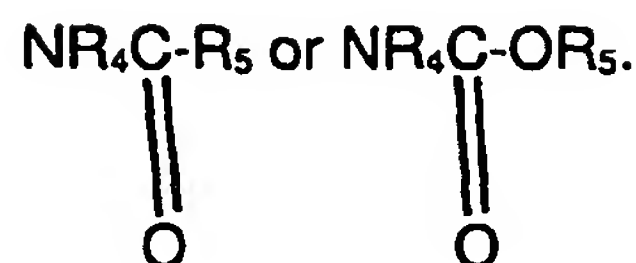
**[0051]** In yet another especially preferred embodiment, n = 1,  $R_2$  is hydrogen and  $R_3$  is lower alkyl which is unsubstituted or substituted with hydroxy or loweralkoxy,  $NR_4OR_5$  or  $ONR_4R_7$ , wherein  $R_4$ ,  $R_5$  and  $R_7$  are independently hydrogen or lower alkyl, R is aryl lower alkyl, which aryl group may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group and  $R_1$  is lower alkyl. In this embodiment it is most preferred that aryl is phenyl, which is unsubstituted or substituted with halo.

**[0052]** It is preferred that  $R_2$  is hydrogen and  $R_3$  is hydrogen, an alkyl group which is unsubstituted or substituted by at least an electron donating or electron withdrawing group or ZY. In this preferred embodiment, it is more preferred that  $R_3$  is hydrogen, an alkyl group such as methyl, which is unsubstituted or substituted by an electron donating group, or  $NR_4OR_5$  or  $ONR_4R_7$ , wherein  $R_4$ ,  $R_5$  and  $R_7$  are independently hydrogen or lower alkyl. It is preferred that the electron donating group is lower alkoxy, and especially methoxy or ethoxy.

It is preferred that  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl, or ZY; Z is O,  $NR_4$  or  $PR_4$ ; Y is hydrogen or lower alkyl or

ZY is  $\text{NR}_4\text{R}_5\text{R}_7$ ,  $\text{NR}_4\text{OR}_5$ ,  $\text{ONR}_4\text{R}_7$ ,

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10 **[0053]** It is also preferred that R is aryl lower alkyl. The most preferred aryl for R is phenyl. The most preferred R group is benzyl. In a preferred embodiment, the aryl group may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron donating or electron withdrawing group. If the aryl ring in R is substituted, it is most preferred that it is substituted with an electron withdrawing group, especially on the aryl ring. The most preferred electron withdrawing group for R is halo, especially fluoro.

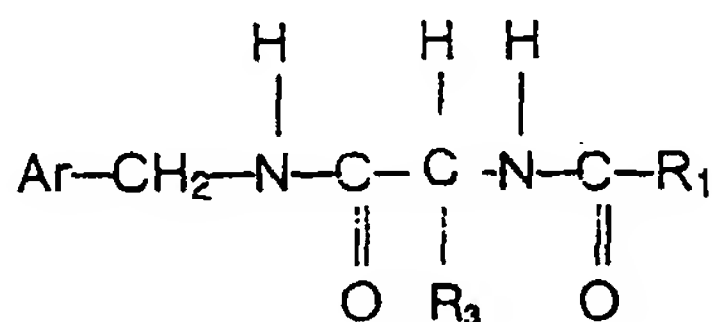
15 **[0054]** The preferred  $\text{R}_1$  is loweralkyl, especially methyl.

**[0055]** It is more preferred that R is aryl lower alkyl and  $\text{R}_1$  is lower alkyl.

**[0056]** Further preferred compounds are compounds of Formula (Ib) wherein n is 1;  $\text{R}_2$  is hydrogen;  $\text{R}_3$  is hydrogen, a lower alkyl group, especially methyl which is substituted by an electron donating or electron withdrawing group or ZY; R is aryl, aryl lower alkyl, such as benzyl, wherein the aryl group is unsubstituted or substituted with an electron donating or electron withdrawing group and  $\text{R}_1$  is lower alkyl. In this embodiment, it is more preferred that  $\text{R}_3$  is hydrogen, a lower alkyl group, especially methyl, which may be substituted by electron donating group, such as lower alkoxy, (e. g., methoxy, ethoxy and the like),  $\text{NR}_4\text{OR}_5$  or  $\text{ONR}_4\text{R}_7$  wherein these groups are defined hereinabove.

20 **[0057]** The most preferred compounds utilized are those of the Formula (IIb):

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30

**Formula (IIb)**

35 wherein

Ar is aryl, especially phenyl, which is unsubstituted or substituted with at least one electron donating group or electron withdrawing group, especially halo,

40  $\text{R}_1$  is lower alkyl, especially containing 1-3 carbon atoms; and

$\text{R}_3$  is as defined herein, but especially hydrogen, loweralkyl, which is unsubstituted or substituted by at least an electron donating group or electron withdrawing group or ZY. It is even more preferred that  $\text{R}_3$  is, in this embodiment, hydrogen, an alkyl group which is unsubstituted or substituted by an electron donating group,  $\text{NR}_4\text{OR}_5$  or  $\text{ONR}_4\text{R}_7$ .  
45 It is most preferred that  $\text{R}_3$  is  $\text{CH}_2\text{-Q}$ , wherein Q is lower alkoxy, especially containing 1-3 carbon atoms;  $\text{NR}_4\text{OR}_5$  or  $\text{ONR}_4\text{R}_7$  wherein  $\text{R}_4$  is hydrogen or alkyl containing 1-3 carbon atoms,  $\text{R}_5$  is hydrogen or alkyl containing 1-3 carbon atoms, and  $\text{R}_7$  is hydrogen or alkyl containing 1-3 carbon atoms.

**[0058]** The most preferred  $\text{R}_1$  is  $\text{CH}_3$ . The most preferred  $\text{R}_3$  is  $\text{CH}_2\text{-Q}$ , wherein Q is methoxy.

50 The most preferred aryl is phenyl. The most preferred halo is fluoro.

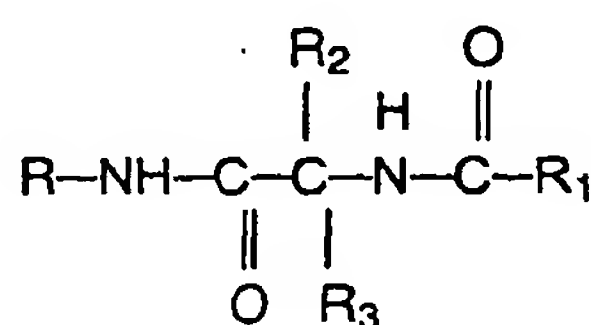
The most preferred compound includes:

(R)-2-acetamido-N-benzyl-3-methoxy-propionamide,  
O-methyl-N-acetyl-D-serine-m-fluorobenzyl-amide;  
55 O-methyl-N-acetyl-D-serine-p-fluorobenzyl-amide;  
N-acetyl-D-phenylglycine benzylamide;  
D-1,2-(N,O-dimethylhydroxylamino)-2-acetamide acetic acid benzylamide;  
D-1,2-(O-methylhydroxylamino)-2-acetamido acetic acid benzylamide.

[0059] It is to be understood that the various combinations and permutations of the Markush groups of  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$ ,  $R_3$ ,  $R$  and  $n$  described herein are contemplated to be within the scope of the present invention. Moreover, the present invention also encompasses compounds and compositions which contain one or more elements of each of the Markush groupings in  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$ ,  $R_3$ ,  $n$  and  $R$  and the various combinations thereof. Thus, for example, the present invention contemplates that  $R_1$  may be one or more of the substituents listed hereinabove in combination with any and all of the substituents of  $R_2$ ,  $R_3$ , and  $R$  with respect to each value of  $n$ .

[0060] The compounds utilized in the present invention may contain one or more asymmetric carbons and may exist in racemic and optically active forms. The configuration around each asymmetric carbon can be either the D or L form. It is well known in the art that the configuration around a chiral carbon atoms can also be described as R or S in the Cahn-Prelog-Ingold nomenclature system. All of the various configurations around each asymmetric carbon, including the various enantiomers and diastereomers as well as racemic mixtures and mixtures of enantiomers, diastereomers or both are contemplated by the present invention.

[0061] In the principal chain, there exists asymmetry at the carbon atom to which the groups  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are attached. When  $n$  is 1, the compounds of the present invention is of the formula



wherein  $R$ ,  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$ ,  $R_3$ ,  $R_4$ ,  $R_5$ ,  $R_6$ ,  $R'_6$ ,  $R_7$ ,  $R_8$ ,  $R_{50}$ ,  $Z$  and  $Y$  are as defined previously.

[0062] As used herein, the term configuration shall refer to the configuration around the carbon atom to which  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are attached, even though other chiral centers may be present in the molecule. Therefore, when referring to a particular configuration, such as D or L, it is to be understood to mean the D or L stereoisomer at the carbon atom to which  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are attached. However, it also includes all possible enantiomers and diastereomers at other chiral centers, if any, present in the compound.

[0063] The compounds of the present invention are directed to all the optical isomers, i.e., the compounds of the present invention are either the L-stereoisomer or the D-stereoisomer (at the carbon atom to which  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are attached). These stereoisomers may be found in mixtures of the L and D stereoisomer, e.g., racemic mixtures. The D stereoisomer is preferred.

[0064] Depending upon the substituents, the present compounds may form addition salts as well. All of these forms are contemplated to be within the scope of this invention including mixtures of the stereoisomeric forms

[0065] The preparation of the utilized compounds are described in U.S. Patent Nos. 5,378,729 and 5,773,475, the contents of both of which are incorporated by reference.

[0066] The compounds utilized in the present invention are useful as such as depicted in the Formula (Ib) or can be employed in the form of salts in view of its basic nature by the presence of the free amino group. Thus, the compounds of Formula (Ib) forms salts with a wide variety of acids, inorganic and organic, including pharmaceutically acceptable acids. The salts with therapeutically acceptable acids are of course useful in the preparation of formulation where enhanced water solubility is most advantageous.

[0067] These pharmaceutically acceptable salts have also therapeutic efficacy. These salts include salts of inorganic acids such as hydrochloric, hydroiodic, hydrobromic, phosphoric, metaphosphoric, nitric acid and sulfuric acids as well as salts of organic acids, such as tartaric, acetic, citric, malic, benzoic, perchloric, glycolic, gluconic, succinic, aryl sulfonic, (e.g., p-toluene sulfonic acids, benzenesulfonic), phosphoric, malonic, and the like.

[0068] It is preferred that the compound utilized in the present invention is used in therapeutically effective amounts.

[0069] The physician will determine the dosage of the present therapeutic agents which will be most suitable and it will vary with the form of administration and the particular compound chosen, and furthermore, it will vary with the patient under treatment, the age of the patient, the type of malady being treated. He will generally wish to initiate treatment with small dosages substantially less than the optimum dose of the compound and increase the dosage by small increments until the optimum effect under the circumstances is reached.

[0070] When the composition is administered orally, larger quantities of the active agent will be required to produce the same effect as a smaller quantity given parenterally. The compounds are useful in the same manner as comparable therapeutic agents and the dosage level is of the same order of magnitude as is generally employed with these other therapeutic agents.

[0071] In a preferred embodiment, the compounds utilized are administered in amounts ranging from about 1 mg to about 100 mg per kilogram of body weight per day. This dosage regimen may be adjusted by the physician to provide

the optimum therapeutic response. For example, several divided doses may be administered daily or the dose may be proportionally reduced as indicated by the exigencies of the therapeutic situation. The compounds of Formula (Ib) may be administered in a convenient manner, such as by oral, intravenous (where water soluble), intramuscular, intrathecal or subcutaneous routes.

**[0072]** The compounds of Formula (Ib) may be orally administered, for example, with an inert diluent or with an assimilable edible carrier, or it may be enclosed in hard or soft shell gelatin capsules, or it may be compressed into tablets, or it may be incorporated directly into the food of the diet. For oral therapeutic administration, the active compound of Formula (Ib) may be incorporated with excipients and used in the form of ingestible tablets, buccal tablets, troches, capsules, elixirs, suspensions, syrups, wafers, and the like. Such compositions and preparations should contain at least 1 % of active compound of Formula (Ib). The percentage of the compositions and preparations may, of course, be varied and may conveniently be between about 5 to about 80 % of the weight of the unit. The amount of active compound of Formula (Ib) in such therapeutically useful compositions is such that a suitable dosage will be obtained. Preferred compositions or preparations according to the present invention contains between about 10 mg and 6 g active compound of Formula (Ib).

**[0073]** The tablets, troches, pills, capsules and the like may also contain the following: A binder such as gum tragacanth, acacia, corn starch or gelatin; excipients such as dicalcium phosphate; a disintegrating agent such as corn starch, potato starch, alginic acid and the like; a lubricant such as magnesium stearate; and a sweetening agent such as sucrose, lactose or saccharin may be added or a flavoring agent such as peppermint, oil of wintergreen, or cherry flavoring. When the dosage unit form is a capsule, it may contain, in addition to materials of the above type, a liquid carrier.

**[0074]** Various other materials may be present as coatings or otherwise modify the physical form of the dosage unit. For instance, tablets, pills, or capsules may be coated with shellac, sugar or both. A syrup or elixir may contain the active compound, sucrose as a sweetening agent, methyl and propylparabens as preservatives, a dye and flavoring such as cherry or orange flavor. Of course, any material used in preparing any dosage unit form should be pharmaceutically pure and substantially non-toxic in the amounts employed. In addition, the active compound may be incorporated into sustained-release preparations and formulations. For example, sustained release dosage forms are contemplated wherein the active ingredient is bound to an ion exchange resin which, optionally, can be coated with a diffusion barrier coating to modify the release properties of the resin.

**[0075]** The active compound may also be administered parenterally or intraperitoneally. Dispersions can also be prepared in glycerol, liquid, polyethylene glycols, and mixtures thereof and in oils. Under ordinary conditions of storage and use, these preparations contain a preservative to prevent the growth of microorganisms.

**[0076]** The pharmaceutical forms suitable for injectable use include sterile aqueous solutions (where water soluble) or dispersions and sterile powders for the extemporaneous preparation of sterile injectable solutions or dispersions. In all cases the form must be sterile and must be fluid to the extent that easy syringability exists. It must be stable under the conditions of manufacture and storage and must be preserved against the contaminating action of microorganisms such as bacteria and fungi. The carrier can be a solvent or dispersion medium containing, for example, water, ethanol, polyol (for example, glycerol, propylene glycol, and liquid polyethylene glycol, and the like), suitable mixtures thereof, and vegetable oils. The proper fluidity can be maintained, for example, by the use of a coating such as lecithin, by the maintenance of the required particle size in the case of dispersions and by the use of surfactants. The prevention of the action of microorganisms can be brought about by various antibacterial and antifungal agents, for example, parabens, chlorobutanol, phenol, sorbic acid, thimerosal, and the like. In many cases, it will be preferable to include isotonic agents, for example, sugars or sodium chloride. Prolonged absorption of the injectable compositions can be brought about by the use in the compositions of agents delaying absorption, for example, aluminium monostearate and gelatin.

**[0077]** Sterile injectable solutions are prepared by incorporating the active compound in the required amount in the appropriate solvent with various of the other ingredients enumerated above, as required, followed by filtered sterilization. Generally, dispersions are prepared by incorporating the various sterilized active ingredient into a sterile vehicle which contains the basic dispersion medium and the required other ingredients from those enumerated above. In the case of sterile powders for the preparation of sterile injectable solutions, the preferred methods of preparation are vacuum drying the freeze-drying technique plus any additional desired ingredient from previously sterile-filtered solution thereof.

**[0078]** As used herein, "pharmaceutically acceptable carrier" includes any and all solvents, dispersion media, coatings, antibacterial and antifungal agent, isotonic and absorption delaying agents for pharmaceutical active substances as well known in the art. Except insofar as any conventional media or agent is incompatible with the active ingredient, its use in the therapeutic compositions is contemplated. Supplementary active ingredients can also be incorporated into the compositions.

**[0079]** It is especially advantageous to formulate parenteral compositions in dosage unit form or ease of administration and uniformity of dosage. Dosage unit form as used herein refers to physically discrete units suited as unitary

dosages for the mammalian subjects to be treated; each unit containing a predetermined quantity of active material calculated to produce the desired therapeutic effect in association with the required pharmaceutical carrier. The specifics for the novel dosage unit forms of the invention are dictated by and directly dependent on (a) the unique characteristics of the active material and the particular therapeutic effect to be achieved, and (b) the limitations inherent in the art of compounding such as active material for the treatment of disease in living subjects having a diseased condition in which bodily health is impaired as herein disclosed in detail.

[0080] The principal active ingredient is compounded for convenient and effective administration in effective amounts with a suitable pharmaceutically acceptable carrier in dosage unit form as hereinbefore described. A unit dosage form can, for example, contain the principal active compound in amounts ranging from about 10 mg to about 6 g. Expressed in proportions, the active compound is generally present in from about 1 to about 750 mg/ml of carrier. In the case of compositions containing supplementary active ingredients, the dosages are determined by reference to the usual dose and manner of administration of the said ingredients.

[0081] As used herein the term "patient" or "subject" refers to a warm blooded animal, and preferably mammals, such as, for example, cats, dogs, horses, cows, pigs, mice, rats and primates, including humans. The preferred patient is humans.

[0082] The term "treat" refers to either relieving the pain associated with a disease or condition or alleviating the patient's disease or condition.

[0083] The compounds of the present invention are administered to a patient suffering from the aforementioned type of pain in an analgesic effective amount. These amounts are equivalent to the therapeutically effective amounts described hereinabove.

[0084] The following working example shows the properties in a well-defined animal model of central neuropathic pain, in particular spinal cord injury pain.

[0085] The used substance was SPM 927 which is the synonym for Harkoseride. The standard chemical nomenclature is (R)-2-acetamide-N-benzyl-3-methoxypropionamide.

## Figure Legend

[0086] Figure 1 shows the effect of vehicle (open circles), SPM 927 at 10 (open squares), 15 (filled circles) and 20 mg/kg (filled squares) on vocalization threshold to stimulation with von Frey hairs (A), brushing (B) and cold (C) in spinally injured rats.  $\ast = p < 0.05$  compared to baseline at time 0 with Wilcoxon signed-ranks test (A-C).

[0087] Figure 2 shows the effect of 20 mg/kg SPM 927 injected twice daily on vocalization threshold to stimulation with von Frey hairs (A), brushing (B) and cold (C) in spinally injured rats. The rats were tested before and after the morning drug administration. The pre-drug threshold (open circles) and 1 h after drug administration (filled circles) are shown. The dashed line indicates the termination of administration of SPM 927.  $\ast = p < 0.05$  and  $\ast\ast = < 0.01$  compared to pre-drug value on each day.  $\dagger = p < 0.05$  and  $\dagger\dagger = p < 0.01$  compared to baseline value on day 1. The comparisons were made with Wilcoxon signed-ranks test (A-C).

[0088] The present invention is further illustrated the by the following Example.

## Example 1

[0089] SPM 927 alleviates neuropathic pain-like behaviours in an animal model for central neuropathic pain.

## Materials and Methods

[0090] Male and female Sprague-Dawley rats (Møllegaard, Denmark) weighing 200-250 g at the start of the experiments were used.

### Photochemically-induced ischemic spinal cord injury

[0091] Ischemic spinal cord injury was produced in female rats according to methods described previously (Xu et al., 1992). In brief, the rats were anesthetized with chloral hydrate (300 mg/kg, i.p.) and a midline incision was made on the skin overlying vertebral segments T12 - L1. The animals were positioned beneath an argon laser beam and irradiated for 10 min with the beam directed towards vertebral segment T12 or T13 (spinal segments L3-5). Immediately prior to and 5 min after the start of the irradiation, erythrosin B (Red No 3, Aldrich-Chemie, Steinheim, Germany) dissolved in 0.9% saline was injected intravenously through the tail vein at a dose of 32.5 mg/kg. A tunable argon ion laser (Innova model 70, Coherent Laser Product Division, Palo Alto, CA) operating at 514 nm was used. The average beam output power was 160 mW. The beam covered the entire width of the vertebra and the length of the beam was 1-2 mm. After irradiation, the wound was closed in layers and the rats were allowed to recover. The bladder was emptied

manually for 1 week.

#### Assessment of mechanical and cold sensitivity after spinal cord injury

- 5 [0092] The vocalization threshold to graded mechanical touch/pressure stimuli were tested with von Frey hairs. During testing the rats were gently restrained in a standing position and the von Frey hair was pushed onto the skin until the filament became bent. The frequency of stimulation was about 1/s and at each intensity the stimulus was applied 5-10 times. The intensity of stimulation which induced consistent vocalization (>75% response rate) was considered as pain threshold.
- 10 [0093] The response of rats to brushing stimulation was tested with the blunt point of a pencil gently stroking the skin on the trunk in a rostro-caudal direction. The frequency of the stimulation was about 1/s and responses were graded with a score of 0 = no observable response; 1 = transient vocalization and moderate effort to avoid probe; 2 = consistent vocalization and aversive reactions and 3 = sustained and prolonged vocalization and aggressive behaviours. Normal rats exhibited no reactions to brush stimuli (score 0).
- 15 [0094] Response to cold was tested with ethyl chloride spray applied to the shaved allodynic skin area. The response was graded with a score of 0 = no observable response; 1 = localized response (skin twitch and contraction), no vocalization; 2 = transient vocalization, moderate struggle and 3 = sustained vocalization and aggression.

#### Drugs and statistics

- 20 [0095] SPM 927 was dissolved in physiological saline and injected intraperitoneally. The data for von Frey hairs, brushing and cold are expressed as median  $\pm$  median absolute deviation (M.A.D.) and analysed with Wilcoxon signed-ranks test or paired t-test.

#### Results

##### Effects of a single dose of SPM 927 on allodynia-like behaviours in spinally injured rats

- 30 [0096] SPM 927 at 10 mg/kg had no effect whereas at 15 mg/kg it partially alleviated mechanical and cold allodynia in the majority, but not all, rats (Fig. 1). The increase in threshold to stimulation with von Frey hairs after 15 mg/kg was significant, but did not return to normal level (Fig. 1a). A significant effect on brushing and cold was also seen at this dose (Fig. 1B, C). SPM 927 at 20 mg/kg completely reversed mechanical and cold allodynia in all rats for about 2 h (Fig. 1).

##### Effects of repeated administration of SPM 927 in spinally injured rats

- 40 [0097] The animals were injected with 20 mg/kg SPM 927 twice a day. The pre-drug response and the response 1 h after injection were assessed in the morning session. On days 1-3 SPM 927 produced an increase in vocalization threshold to von Frey hair stimulation, similar to the single injection experiments (Fig. 2A). Interestingly, the pre-drug response to von Frey hair stimulation was normalized on day 4 (Fig. 2A). The baseline responses to brushing (Fig. 2B) and cold (Fig. 2C) were also normalized from day 2 to day 6 respectively. The normalization of basal sensitivity lasted at least 8 days without signs of tolerance. Administration of SPM 927 was discontinued after day 7 and the allodynia to stimulation with von Frey hairs and cold reappeared on day 9, but the effect on brush stimulation was maintained up to day 11 (Fig. 2).

#### References

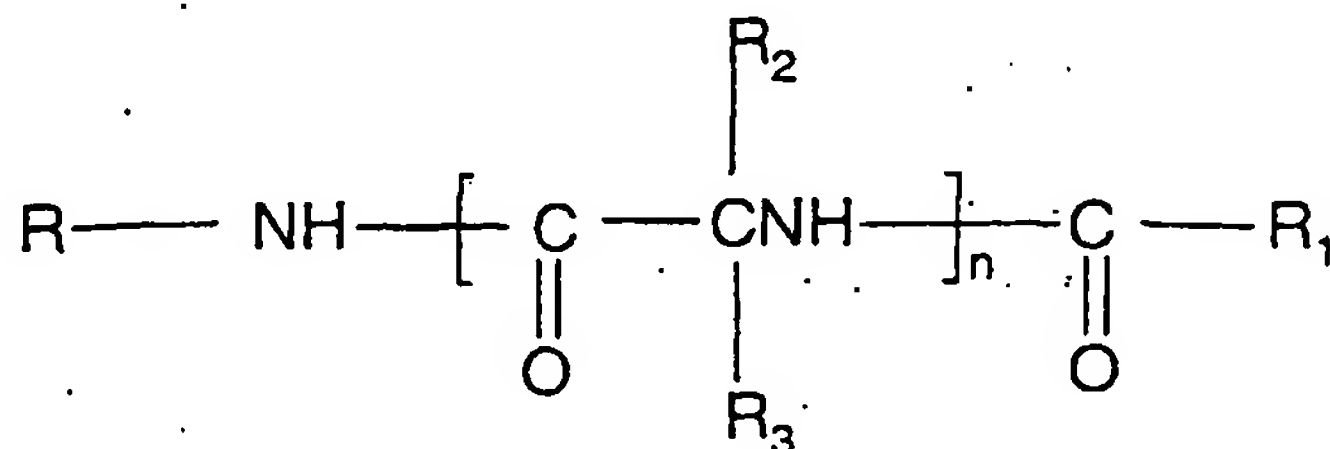
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## Claims

1. Use of a compound having the Formula (Ib)



## Formula (Ib)

wherein

R is hydrogen, lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, aryl, aryl lower alkyl, heterocyclic, heterocyclic lower alkyl, lower alkyl heterocyclic, lower cycloalkyl or lower cycloalkyl lower alkyl, and R is unsubstituted or is substituted with at least one electron withdrawing group or electron donating group;

R<sub>1</sub> is hydrogen or lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, aryl lower alkyl, aryl, heterocyclic lower alkyl, lower alkyl heterocyclic, heterocyclic, lower cycloalkyl, lower cycloalkyl lower alkyl, each unsubstituted or substituted with an electron donating group or an electron withdrawing group;

R<sub>2</sub> and R<sub>3</sub> are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, aryl lower alkyl, aryl, halo, heterocyclic, heterocyclic lower alkyl, lower alkyl heterocyclic, lower cycloalkyl, lower cycloalkyl lower alkyl, or Z-Y wherein R<sub>2</sub> and R<sub>3</sub> may be unsubstituted or substituted with at least one electron withdrawing group or electron donating group; and wherein heterocyclic in R<sub>2</sub> and R<sub>3</sub> is furyl, thienyl, pyrazolyl, pyrrolyl, methylpyrrolyl, imidazolyl, indolyl, thiazolyl, oxazolyl, isothiazolyl, isoxazolyl, piperidyl, pyrrolinyl, piperazinyl, quinolyl, triazolyl, tetrazolyl, isoquinolyl, benzofuryl, benzothienyl, morpholinyl, benzoxazolyl, tetrahydrofuryl, pyranyl, indazolyl, purinyl, indolinyl, pyrazolindinyl, imidazolindinyl, pyrrolidinyl, furazanyl, N-methylindolyl, methylfuryl, pyridazinyl, pyrimidinyl, pyrazinyl, pyridyl, epoxy, aziridino, oxetanyl, azetidiny or, when N is present in the heterocyclic, an N-oxide thereof;

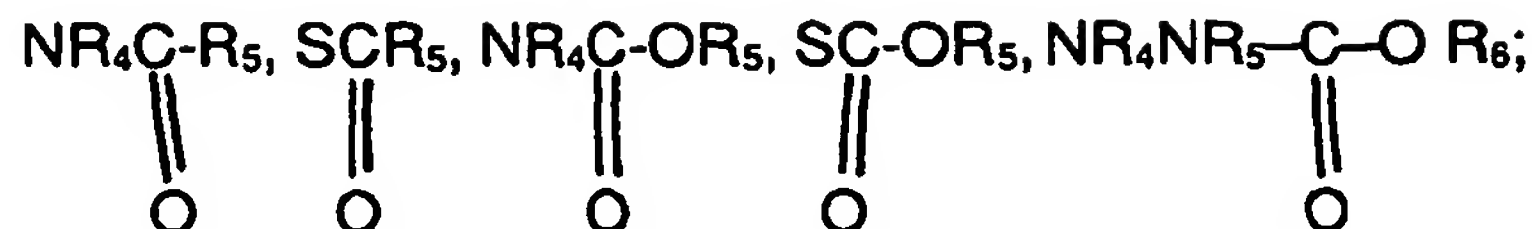
Z is O, S, S(O)<sub>2</sub>, NR<sub>4</sub>, NR<sub>6</sub>' or PR<sub>4</sub> or a chemical bond;

Y is hydrogen, lower alkyl, aryl, aryl lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkynyl, halo, heterocyclic, heterocyclic lower alkyl, lower alkyl heterocyclic and Y may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron donating group or an electron withdrawing group, wherein heterocyclic has the same meaning as in R<sub>2</sub> or R<sub>3</sub> and, provided that when Y is halo, Z is a chemical bond, or

ZY taken together is NR<sub>4</sub>NR<sub>5</sub>R<sub>7</sub>, NR<sub>4</sub>OR<sub>5</sub>, ONR<sub>4</sub>R<sub>7</sub>, OPR<sub>4</sub>R<sub>5</sub>, PR<sub>4</sub>OR<sub>5</sub>, SNR<sub>4</sub>R<sub>7</sub>, NR<sub>4</sub>SR<sub>7</sub>, SPR<sub>4</sub>R<sub>5</sub>, PR<sub>4</sub>SR<sub>7</sub>,

$\text{NR}_4\text{PR}_5\text{R}_6$ ,  $\text{PR}_4\text{NR}_5\text{R}_7$ , or  $\text{N}^+\text{R}_5\text{R}_6\text{R}_7$ .

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$\text{R}_6'$  is hydrogen, lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, or lower alkynyl which may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group or electron donating group;

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$\text{R}_4$ ,  $\text{R}_5$  and  $\text{R}_6$  are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl, aryl, aryl lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, or lower alkynyl, wherein  $\text{R}_4$ ,  $\text{R}_5$  and  $\text{R}_6$  may independently be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group or an electron donating group; and

$\text{R}_7$  is  $\text{R}_6$  or  $\text{COOR}_8$  or  $\text{COR}_8$ , which  $\text{R}_7$  may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group or an electron donating group;

20

$\text{R}_8$  is hydrogen or lower alkyl, or aryl lower alkyl, and the aryl or alkyl group may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group or an electron donating group; and

$n$  is 1-4; and

25

$a$  is 1-3,

or of a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof,

for the preparation of a pharmaceutical composition for the treatment of central neuropathic pain in mammals, preferably spinal cord injury pain.

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2. Use of a compound according to claim 1 wherein one of  $\text{R}_2$  and  $\text{R}_3$  is hydrogen.

3. Use of a compound according to claim 1 wherein  $n$  is 1.

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4. Use of a compound according to claim 1 wherein one of  $\text{R}_2$  and  $\text{R}_3$  is hydrogen and  $n$  is 1.

5. Use of a compound according to claim 1 wherein  $\text{R}$  is aryl lower alkyl and  $\text{R}_1$  is lower alkyl.

6. Use of a compound according to claim 1 wherein

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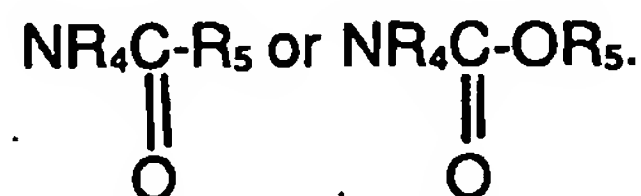
$\text{R}_2$  and  $\text{R}_3$  are independently hydrogen, lower alkyl, or  $\text{ZY}$ ;

$\text{Z}$  is  $\text{O}$ ,  $\text{NR}_4$  or  $\text{PR}_4$ ;

$\text{Y}$  is hydrogen or lower alkyl or

$\text{ZY}$  is  $\text{NR}_4\text{NR}_5\text{R}_7$ ,  $\text{NR}_4\text{OR}_5$ ,  $\text{ONR}_4\text{R}_7$ ,

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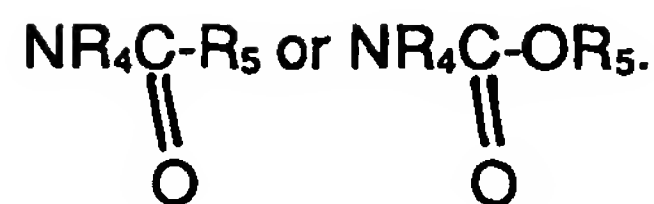
7. Use of a compound according to claim 4 wherein  $\text{R}_2$  is hydrogen and  $\text{R}_3$  is lower alkyl, or  $\text{ZY}$ ;

$\text{Z}$  is  $\text{O}$ ,  $\text{NR}_4$  or  $\text{PR}_4$ ;

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$\text{Y}$  is hydrogen or lower alkyl;

$\text{ZY}$  is  $\text{NR}_4\text{NR}_5\text{R}_7$ ,  $\text{NR}_4\text{OR}_5$ ,  $\text{ONR}_4\text{R}_7$ ,



8. Use of a compound according to claim 4 wherein  $\text{R}_2$  is hydrogen and  $\text{R}_3$  is lower alkyl, which may be substituted or unsubstituted with an electron donating or electron withdrawing group,  $\text{NR}_4\text{OR}_5$ , or  $\text{ONR}_4\text{R}_7$ .

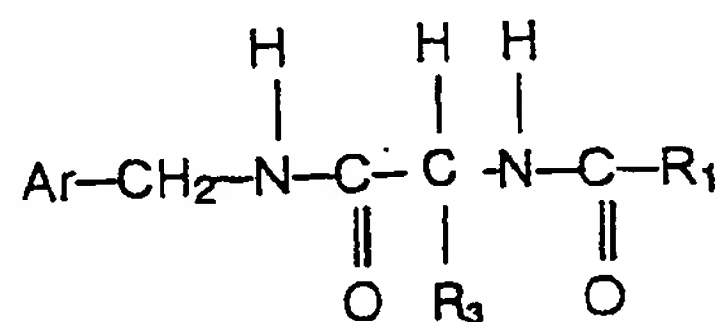
9. Use of a compound according to claim 4 wherein  $\text{R}_3$  is lower alkyl which is unsubstituted or substituted with hydroxy or loweralkoxy,  $\text{NR}_4\text{OR}_5$  or  $\text{ONR}_4\text{R}_7$ , wherein  $\text{R}_4$ ,  $\text{R}_5$  and  $\text{R}_7$  are independently hydrogen or lower alkyl,  $\text{R}$  is aryl loweralkyl, which aryl group may be unsubstituted or substituted with an electron withdrawing group and  $\text{R}_1$  is lower alkyl.

10. Use of a compound according to claim 9 wherein aryl is phenyl and is unsubstituted or substituted with halo.

11. Use of a compound according to claim 1 wherein the compound is

(R)-2-acetamido-N-benzyl-3-methoxy-propionamide;  
 O-methyl-N-acetyl-D-serine-m-fluorobenzylamide;  
 O-methyl-N-acetyl-D-serine-p-fluorobenzylamide;  
 N-acetyl-D-phenylglycinebenzylamide;  
 D-1,2-(N, O-dimethylhydroxylamino)-2-acetamide acetic acid benzylamide;  
 D-1,2-(O-methylhydroxylamino)-2-acetamido acetic acid benzylamide.

12. Use of a compound of claim 1 having the Formula (IIb)



### Formula (IIb)

wherein

$\text{Ar}$  is phenyl which is unsubstituted or substituted with at least one halo group;  
 $\text{R}_3$  is  $\text{CH}_2\text{-Q}$ , wherein  $\text{Q}$  is lower alkoxy containing 1-3 carbon atoms and  
 $\text{R}_1$  is lower alkyl containing 1-3 carbon atoms

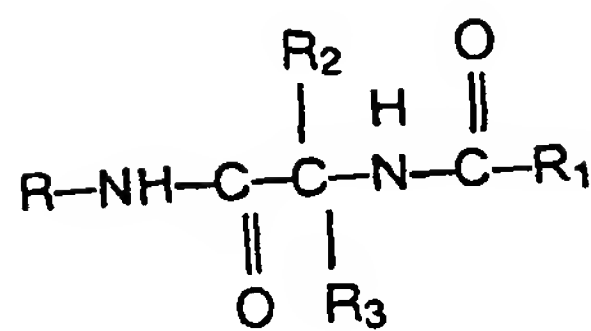
or of a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

13. Use of a compound according to claim 12 wherein  $\text{Ar}$  is unsubstituted phenyl.

14. Use of a compound according to claims 12 and 13 wherein halo is fluoro.

15. Use of a compound according to claims 12-14 wherein  $\text{R}_3$  is  $\text{CH}_2\text{-Q}$ , wherein  $\text{Q}$  is alkoxy containing 1-3 carbon atoms and  $\text{Ar}$  is unsubstituted phenyl.

16. Use of a compound of claim 1 in the R configuration having the formula



R

wherein

Ar is phenyl which is unsubstituted or substituted with at least one halo group;

R<sub>3</sub> is CH<sub>2</sub>-Q, wherein Q is lower alkoxy containing 1-3 carbon atoms and R<sub>1</sub> is methyl or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

17. Use of the compound according to claim 16 which is substantially enantiopure.

18. Use of a compound according to claims 16 and 17 wherein Ar is unsubstituted phenyl.

19. Use of a compound according to claims 16 to 18 wherein halo is fluoro.

20. Use of a compound according to claims 16 to 19 wherein R<sub>3</sub> is CH<sub>2</sub>-Q, wherein Q is alkoxy containing 1-3 carbon atoms and Ar is unsubstituted phenyl.

21. Use of a compound according to claim 1, wherein the compound of Formula (Ib) is (R)-2-Acetamido-N-benzyl-3-methoxypropionamide or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

22. Use of the compound according to claim 21 which is substantially enantiopure.

23. Use of a compound according to any of the preceding claims for reducing the susceptibility of patients to spinal cord injury pain in particular and centrally mediated neuropathic pain in general.

Figure 1

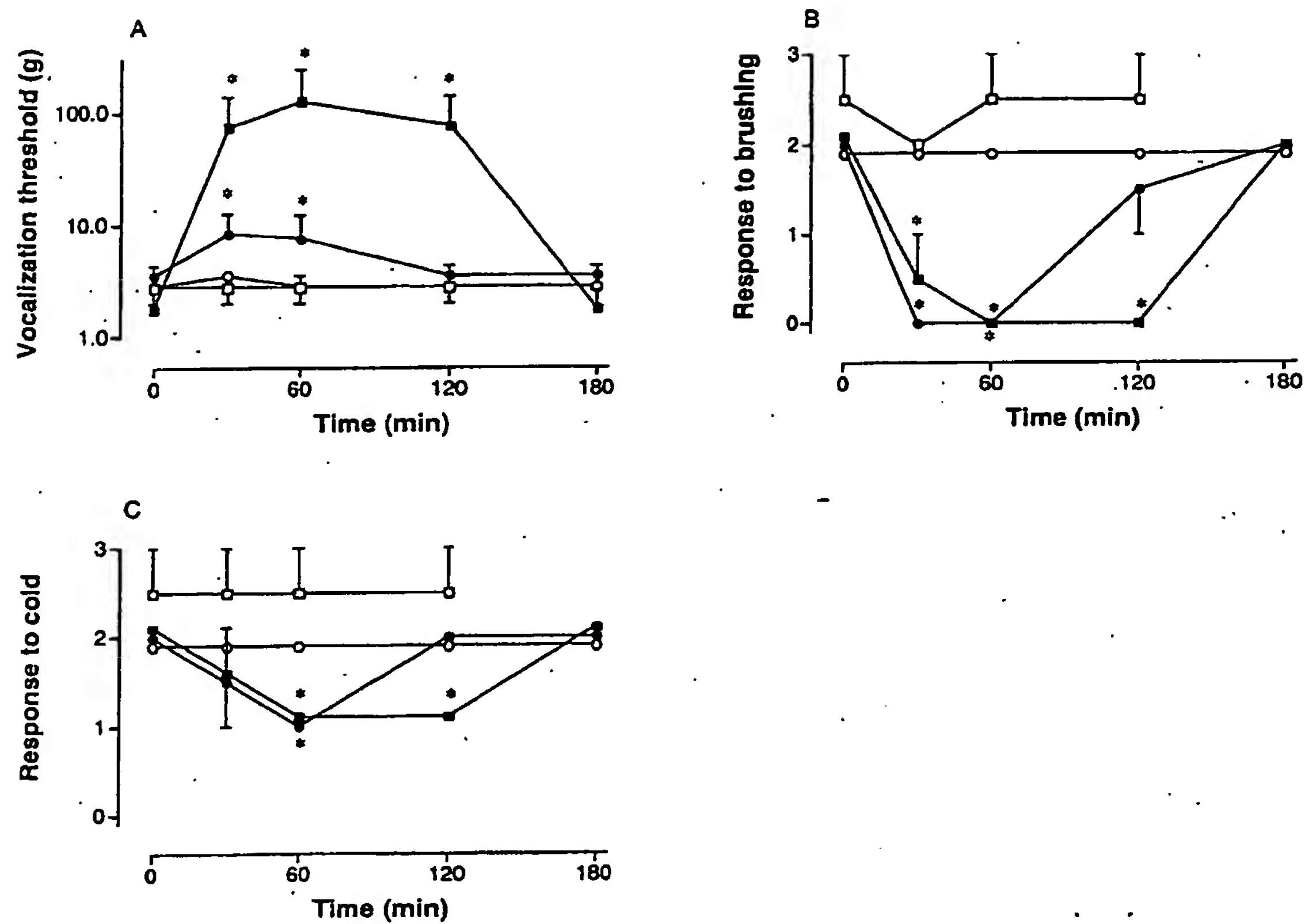
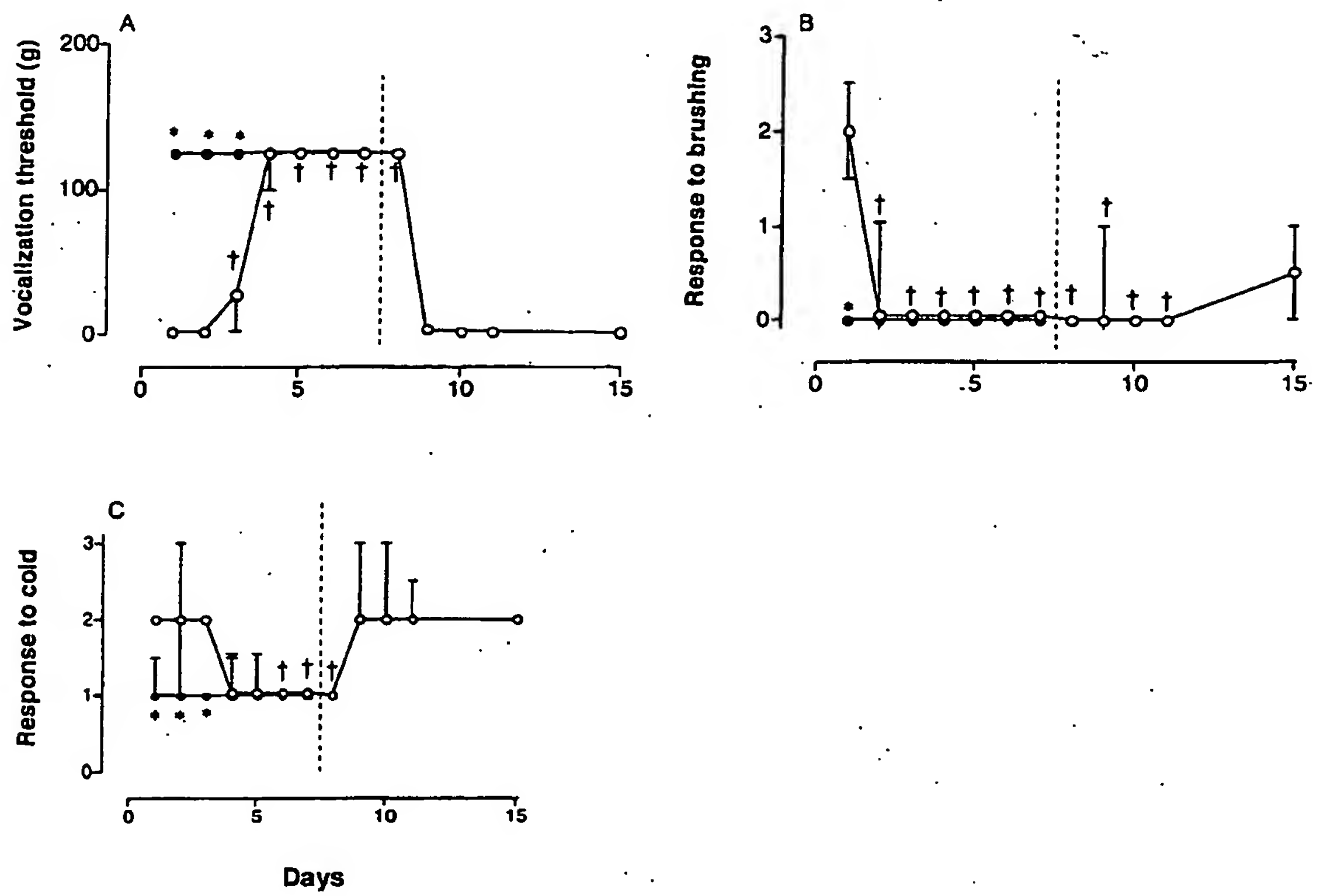


Figure 2





European Patent  
Office

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Application Number  
EP 03 02 7742

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Place of search MUNICH		Date of completion of the search 22 March 2004	Examiner Allnutt, S
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